

REMARKS

Initially, Applicants would like to express their appreciation to the Examiner for the detailed Official Action provided, for the indication that the drawings filed on February 6, 2002 are acceptable, for the acknowledgment of Applicants' Claim for Priority and receipt of the certified copies of the priority documents, and for the acknowledgment of Applicants' Information Disclosure Statement by return of the Form PTO-1449.

Applicants acknowledge with appreciation the indication that claims 1-24 and 33-49 are allowable, and that claims 26-32 contain allowable subject matter, on page 2 and 3 of the Official Action.

Upon entry of the above amendments, claim 25 will have been amended and claim 26 will have been canceled. Claims 1-25 and 27-49 are currently pending. Applicants respectfully request reconsideration of the outstanding objections and rejections, and allowance of all the claims pending in the present application.

On page 2 of the Official Action, claim 25 was rejected under 35 U.S.C. § 102(b) as being anticipated by TANAKA (U.S. Patent No. 5,589,987).

Applicants respectfully traverse the rejection of claim 25 under 35 U.S.C. § 102(b).

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Applicants note that claim 25 has been amended to recite the subject matter of previous claim 26, which the Examiner has indicated as being allowable. Applicants respectfully submit that the rejection of claim 25 as amended is improper. Accordingly, Applicants respectfully request reconsideration and withdrawal of the rejection, and an early indication of the allowance of claims 25 and 27-32.

COMMENTS ON REASONS FOR ALLOWANCE

In regard to the Examiner's indication of allowable subject matter in claims 1-24 and 26-49 on pages 2 and 3 of the Official Action, Applicants do not necessarily agree with the Examiner's statement that "The scopes of independent claims 1, 8, 18 and 41 are narrower than those of claims 25 and 33." Rather, Applicants note that all of the claims vary in scope with regard to their respective recited features. Further, Applicants wish to make clear that the claims in the present application recite a combination of features, and that the patentability of these claims is based on the totality of the features recited therein, which define over the prior art. Thus the reasons for allowance should not be limited to those mentioned by the Examiner.

SUMMARY AND CONCLUSION


Entry and consideration of the present amendment, reconsideration of the outstanding Official Action, and allowance of the present application and all of the claims therein are respectfully requested and now believed to be appropriate.

Applicants have made a sincere effort to place the present application in condition for allowance and believe that they have now done so.

Any amendments to the claims that have been made in this amendment, which do not narrow the scope of the claims, and which have not been specifically noted to overcome a rejection based upon the prior art, should be considered cosmetic in nature, and to have been made for a purpose unrelated to patentability, and no estoppel should be deemed to attach thereto.

Should there be any questions or comments, the Examiner is invited to contact the undersigned at the below-listed telephone number.

Respectfully submitted,
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